

Status Report

A REPORT ON DEATHS IN BAWANA RESETTLEMENT COLONY

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Immediate Investigation on the Death of 12 Children in Bawana Resettlement Colony

Bawana resettlement colony (known as Bawana JJ Colony) was established after acquisition of acres of fertile lands belonging to the farmers of Bawana Village. This is adjacent to Bawana Industrial Area, where the number of running units are negligible even after its been allotted four years ago. Bwana is around 35 kms away from the city centre where most of the displaced people work and study. To make the worst is the present situation which is the purpose of this report.

Introduction

On the 6th of July, 2004, **The Hindu** reported (Annexure I) the death of 17 people, including 12 children, in the Bawana Resettlement Colony due to water borne diseases, unhygienic living conditions and absence of medical facilities in the colony. The issue was discussed in the Sajha Manch, a coalition of over 40 organisations working on various issues related to the lives and livelihoods of the urban poor in Delhi. It was the matter be verified by undertaking a field investigation. On July 17, 2004, a six-member team of Sajha Manch accompanied by a water-testing expert from Development Alternatives made a site visit to the Bawana Resettlement Colony.

Field observations

The objective of the visit was to survey the families where deaths had taken place in the last three months. The team could contact only 9 of the 17 families since some of them were away. The following is a tabulation of the facts about the deaths in the colony, based on the versions of these families and the other residents.

S.-no	Name	Period of Death	Father's Name	Gender	Age	Place of Residence in past	Present Address	Size of the Plot	Causes of death
1.	Imran	2.5 month back	Mustafa	M	2.5 yrs	Kanchan-puri	745/A Block	18 sq mts	Feve
2.			Mannah		10 yrs				
3.	Sarfraz	12 Jan	Md. Sadre	M	2.5 yrs	Shantiva	934/A Block	18 sq mt	Diarrhea
4.	Nasir	15 June 2004	Yakub	M	1.5 yrs	Kanchan-puri	802/ D Bloc	12 sq mts	Diarrhe
5.	Muddaki		Md. Fatheh		6 months	Power House	400/A Block	12 sq mt	
6.	Sabir	2 months bac			60 yrs		A Block		Did not wake up from the slee
7.			Dabir		5 yrs		A Block		Weeknes
8.	Tasleem				55 yrs				
9.		3-4 days back	Kamil	F	7 month				

Note: The residents also reported that 5-6 children had died of drowning, while bathing in the nearby Northern Yamuna Canal.

It was seen that people started dying within a month of their stay in Bawana. Most of those who died are children between the age group of 1-10 years. It was concluded that most of the people died of water borne diseases and diseases caused by unsanitary conditions of survival.

The team focussed on the issues of water, sanitation and health facilities. The observations of the team on these issues have been mentioned below.

Water & Sanitation:

Water is being supplied through bore well and till date the Delhi Jal Board has made no other arrangement. A team member from Development Alternative tested the water of these bore-wells. As per the test:

- In two of the six samples the coliform found was indicative the faecal matter in the water.
- Two of the samples had fluoride contents above desirable levels.
- None of the samples had detectable levels of chlorine, which shows that water has not been purified adequately by the concerned authorities.
- It has been found that as a result of poor availability of water and its bad quality most of the residents were suffering from skin diseases such as red rashes, dry scaly skin and heat rashes etc. These skin diseases were most commonly found among women and children.

Most of the plots are 4 -5 feet below the road. The provisions made for drains within the colony are thus rendered ineffective. Even these drains do not lead anywhere consequently both waste and storm water stagnates within the colony. During the rains there is water logging both within the houses too. People rightly perceive that this water logging causes several diseases.

Health and Health Services:

As for the past four months most of the people are unemployed, and have exhausted almost all of their savings. Few families are somehow managing their regular daily meals. Cases of under nutrition were found among children.

Provisions for 3 dispensaries have been made in the colony, but as of now, not even a single dispensary is operational. People are dependent upon mobile health van of the Directorate of Health Services, which is rarely visible in the colony. And whenever it is visible, it only distributes medicines for minor diseases. For serious diseases people either go to Maharishi Balmiki Hospital (approximately 3 kms from the colony) or to Loknayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital (located near ITO, which is 35 kms from the colony).

Conclusion

The team has found that even after four months of resettlement, the people are bereft of adequate basic amenities. The overall situation in the colony is dismal and there is a need for immediate and effective intervention in order to improve the living conditions of the people in Bawana. In case, immediate action is not taken, the situation will worsen and it would not be surprising, if more cases of death are reported.